

R E V I E W.

Saturday, May 16. 1713.

THE great Debate now is about taking off the additional Duties upon the *French* Wines and Brandy, in order to have the Prohibitions, or high Duties taken off of our Woollen Manufactures in *France*: This, some say, they take to be the true Intent and Meaning of the 9th Article of the Treaty of Commerce now entred into with *France*, and printed by Authority.

For my part I do not see any thing of that kind in the Article, perhaps I may be mistaken, but it seems to me rather a referring the Case, by the Plenipotentiaries, to the Parliament of *Great Britain*; and letting them see the opening the *French* Trade is in their Hands, and the Terms of it, that they may act in it as they think fit.

It is not a Dispute of the least Nicety in the World, Whether our additional Duties and Prohibitions on *French* Goods ought to be taken off, or remain; and while it is in Debate before the House, I care not to give my Judgment so freely as I might otherwise do, least I give Offence where I do not design it. But this I must say is to me something rational, That we can hardly expect the *French* should agree to take off the high Duties and Prohibitions on our Goods in *France*, and leave us to continue our high Duties and Prohibitions upon their Goods in *England*. This would have been an Article to have been expected if the King of *France* had been Prisoner of War at *Nottingham*, instead of Marshal *Tallard*; or that like King *Augustus* to the *Swede* he had sign'd *Charte Blanche* to us.

The Medium between these things, on every side, seems to be the Business of the Day, and the leaving it to be debated by Commissioners on both sides, was certainly the wisest Step, if not the only Step the Ministers abroad could take; the Difficulties before them not being within the reach of their Powers to determine; for Plenipotentiaries cannot repeal Acts of Parliament, and the Persons employ'd in this Treaty were neither so weak to act beyond the extent of their Power, or so ignorant as not to know their own Bounds.

That upon a Peace some of our high Duties upon *French* Goods, may be taken off without detriment

to our Trade, nay ought, for the Advantage of Commerce, to be taken off, is most certain, That all additional Duties cannot be taken off, without ruining our Trade in some of its capital Articles, seems to me Natural, and I cannot think any one will dispute it; a Treaty then of Mediums and Proportions may most certainly bring this to a beneficial Period; Equalities always are the Foundation of Right; and Proportions, like *Weight for Inches, among the Horse-racers*, bring every Difference to an Agreement.

To continue 52 l. a Ton upon *French* Wine, and 6s. 6d. per Gallon upon Brandy! what are the Consequences but to encourage clandestine Trade, by making it worth while for the private Trader to run all Hazards to get it ashore without paying any thing at all? What does it do, but to enable him to give large Bribes to corrupt the Officers, and make those very Hands that are employ'd to keep it out, Assistants to bring it in? By this means the Distilling Trade is ruin'd, *French* Brandy sold cheaper in many Parts of *England* and *Scotland*, especially near the Sea, than *English* Spirits. By this means the fair Merchant is foreclosed, his Trade taken out of his Hands, and general Commerce set with the bottom upward.

But on the other hand, neither do I say that all the Duties added upon the *French* Trade should be taken off; nay, the *French* do not demand it, they know it would be absurd, and inconsistent with the nature of the Trade. This would bring *French* Wines to 9 l. 15 s. a Ton Custom, or thereabout, and let in such an Inundation of Claret, as would endanger drowning something else besides our Trade; nor will I say, that what the *French* aim at is right, (*viz.*) Reducing the Duties of their Wines to an equal Rate with that of Wines of other Countries, because those Countries are farther off, the Freights dearer, the Wines themselves dearer; and this would still give the *French* Wine the Advantage, besides many other things which might be spoken off.

But a Proportion may, no doubt, be found out, which on our Part would open a reasonable Sluice to the *French* Trade, without letting in the Flood of it to overwhelm us. And in lieu of this, it is enough to

to Article with the *French King* for a like and proportioned Abatement of Duties on his side; and this would be as much as we need ask of the *French*; for give me leave to say there is this difference in Trade between the *French* and us, (*viz.*) That there are many things which they take of us, that are so absolutely necessary to them, that they cannot want them, they cannot be without them: On the other hand, There are very few things, if any, which we take of them, but we can easily do without; for Example, On their side, they cannot be without our Lead, Tin, Leather, and I might add our Wooll; the worst is ours that we do not prevent it.

On the other hand, We have very little from them, but what we can very well be without; and this Difference gives us some Advantage in the matter of laying, or keeping on Duties, and may perhaps bring them to be willing to come to just Proportions, such as the Trade will admit of on both sides.

But if the *French* reject such Proportions, and refuse to make a new Tariff or Standard of Duties, we are still where we were; and the present Treaty, if it cannot have obtain'd such a Commerce as we would have it, has yet left the Staff in our Hands, and we are still as well as we were after the Peace of *Ryswick*, and much better than we were before the Revolution.

I forbear to enter farther into this Affair at present, this may serve to take off the Amusement some People seem to be under; and as I hear a State of of the Case is preparing for the Publick, by a much abler Hand than mine; I shall deter a while what farther Thoughts I have upon this Occasion.

I cannot omit that I have received a long, but judicious and respectful Letter, from an unknown Hand, sign'd *J. M.* relating to what I have advanc'd about the *French* falling into our Manufactures; in which, tho' the Gentleman and I differ in some things, (*viz.*) Of the quantity of Manufactures the *French* make; and of which, when I come

to speak, I will do his Opinion all the Justice, and give him all the Honour that his Merit, and my Respect obliges me to. I say, tho' we differ in those things, we agree perfectly in this, That the greatest Injury to our Woollen Manufactures, and the greatest Support to theirs, (*French*) is the clandestine Exportation of our Wooll to them; which tho', as that Gentleman may observe, I hinted at before; and which, indeed, was the first view upon which the *French* thought fit to prompt their People to Manufacturing; yet I am content to mention it again upon his Motion.

We may talk what we please of the *French* Manufacturing and ruining our Trade, but it is our selves that ruin our Trade: What was formerly said by a great Foreigner, with respect to our Politick State is true also of our Trade, That *England* can never be ruin'd but by her self: To what Purpose has Providence with-held Wooll, the essential Principle of the Trade, from the *French*, if they can find the way to ours; and to what Purpose do we Complain of the *French* falling into our Woollen Manufactures, while we daily supply them with the Materials; if they have 167000 Packs of Wooll a Year from *Britain* and *Ireland*, as I have heard they once had, how can we think to preserve our Trade?

In short, if you cannot stop the going of your Wooll out of the Nation, you may as well open a Man's Veins, and say to him, *Live*, and *walk about*, when at the same time he is bleeding to Death; as to say to the Nation, Trade thrive, and carry on your Universal Commerce; when the Wooll, which is the Life and Blood of Trade is carried away, to those who alone can ruin our Trade.

Some speedy, more effectual, and certain Method then must be found out, to put a stop to the going out of our Wooll, or all your Tariffs of Trade, and Treaties of Commerce that are, or can be made, will not save our Trade from immediate Destruction.